



## INTRODUCTORY

### 1 What do you know about us?

Open question which can give you an indication of the extent the candidate has prepared. Look out for knowledge of company history, product set, share price, LinkedIn info, press releases.

### 2 What is your understanding of the role?

Check and balance question to ensure the candidate's expectations of the role available are in line with your own.

### 3 Why do you want the role?

How much thought have they given to the interview? Do they want to work for you, or are they just looking for 'any' sales job?

### 4 Tell the candidate clearly what you are looking for. Then ask 'why are you the right person for the job?'

If the candidate clearly understands what your requirement is, he/she then has the opportunity to demonstrate they are the right person for the job.

## PAST POSITIONS

### 5 How did you find out about the job?

How serious do they take their career? Did they target a specific company / market or 'fall into' a role? How seriously do they take their career?

### 6 What did you like about the company before you joined?

Sales people should prepare, did they research? Those who think hard before making a career move perform better than those who will take the first job offered to them.

### 7 What did you sell?

Simple fact finding. A good sales person should ensure you understand their products & services, based on an articulate and concise delivery.

### 8 What did you like most about your products / services?

Assess fit with solutions to be sold in the role on offer.

### 9 What did you dislike most about your products / services?

Assess fit with solutions to be sold in the role on offer.

### 10 What markets did you sell to?

Fact Finding.

### 11 What percentage of your role was new business as opposed to account management?

Job titles can be misleading. Do you need a hunter or a farmer?

### 12 How much of your business was repeat business? Cross Selling?

Qualify if truly a hunter or a farmer...

### 13 What was your territory/patch? Home Based?

Fact Finding. Many field sales roles are home based. If the role is office based, qualify that the candidate is comfortable with this.

### 14 Who did you sell to? What was your level of negotiation?

At what level does the candidate operate? E.g. 'C' level, Director level etc.

### 15 What was the average order value? What did the order values range from / to?

Do you need compatible deal sizes - for example you would be concerned giving a guy with experience closing £10k deals responsibility for £1m+ deals.

### 16 What was the sales cycle?

How compatible are the sales cycles with the lead times associated with this role?

### 17 What type of sales cycle do you prefer? Long and high value or short and regular deals?

Assess compatibility - no good someone liking regular small wins if you need someone to get you big wins which take time.

### 18 How much internal competition did you have?

Fact finding, how many employed in a similar sales role?

### 19 Where did you rank?

You want performers, not cast offs.



**20 What was your best deal? How did you win it?**

Can you see them doing a similar deal in your company? How resource dependent were they to pull the deal through?

**21 Tell me about 'the one that got away.' Why did it get away?**

Look for honesty and to see if they have learned from any mistakes.

**22 What other notable achievements would you like to make me aware of?**

Chance for them to sell.

**23 What was your starting basic salary?**

Fact Finding.

**24 What was your leaving basic salary?**

A helpful indication of the speed of their progression. Most importantly will give you the basic salary for the most recent position.

**25 What was your target?**

Fact Finding.

**26 What did you achieve?**

Important thing here is to break down to EACH individual FY. Poor performers may try and flannel you - the facts are your friend.

**27 What were your P60 earnings?**

Again repeat this for each year. BIG difference between OTE and P60 earnings. Look for discrepancies between the target achievement & P60 earnings - they should match.

**28 What documents have you brought to the interview which might demonstrate your sales track record?**

Has the candidate brought P60's, client references, employer references or anything else of interest?

**29 What was your reason for leaving?**

Excuse merchant? Overly negative against previous employer? Or professional, cogent and justifiable reasons?

**30 If I were to ask for a reference, would you get a good one?**

Look for their reaction alongside listening to their answer.

**31 How would you describe your attendance/sickness record?**

Asking this question immediately after asking about references makes it likely that if there is a problem in this regard it will flag up here.

**32 Describe your greatest contribution to the company's success?**

Very open question - you may hear about 'above and beyond' contributions or deduce that you are looking at a 9 to 5'er ...

## CULTURAL FIT

**33 What resources do you need to do your job?**

Has the candidate got normal requirements or could they be difficult and 'needy'?

**34 How resource dependant are you?**

Ask them direct - how much help do you need from others to win your deals?

**35 What support do you need?**

Qualify reliance on internal sales, Pre-Post Sales, Marketing etc. Does this fit your company?

**36 Do you prefer to work alone, or as part of a team?**

Try to shove them off the fence? If you HAD to choose team or alone, which one?

**37 If you are a team player, provide an example.**

Ask if appropriate, no point having someone join who will not be happy with the culture.

**38 How do you feel about working longer hours?**

See how this fits with your culture. You want hard workers - there is also no point in presenteeism.

**39 How many hours per week do you need to get the job done?**

The early bird catches the worm.

**40 What time do you get up? When do you begin work?**

How would this approach fit with your culture?



#### **41 Describe a typical working day.**

Fact Finding

#### **42 Give me an example of when you took the time to share a co-worker's achievements with others.**

Is this a positive person, a good motivator? Or a lone rider who would never do such a thing.

#### **43 What type of people do you work well with?**

Use the answer to gauge whether there is a fit in terms of the team the candidate would join.

#### **44 What type of people do you least enjoy working with?**

Use the answer to gauge whether there is a fit in terms of the team the candidate would join.

#### **45 Would you say you are easy or difficult to manage? What would you base your answer on?**

Some very good sales people are difficult to manage. You may be up for the challenge, but need to know what you are letting yourself in for.

#### **46 How would your best friends describe your personality? What would they say are your best points?**

A different angle to uncover the person, not the candidate.

#### **47 What would your friends say are your worst points?**

A different angle to uncover the person, not the candidate.

#### **48 What was the name of your last boss? When I ask him, what would [X] say is your biggest weakness?**

You are more likely to get a truthful answer if the candidate at least thinks you will reference and if you refer to the potential referrer by name.

#### **49 How would your clients describe you?**

Fact Finding

#### **50 When was the last time you lost your temper? What happened?**

A different angle to uncover the person, not the candidate.

#### **51 When was the last time you disagreed with your boss? What happened?**

A different angle to assess how easy / hard they are to manage and qualify the real person.

#### **52 Professionally speaking, when was the last time you were 'out of your depth'?**

How honest is the answer? Does this give you an idea of the candidate's scope / limitations?

#### **53 Who has had the biggest influence on your career to date? Why?**

If a professional inspiration, you can get a feel for the management style which the candidate responds to.

#### **54 Who was your best boss? Why? Who was your worst boss? Why?**

Use the answer to work out whether they would like working for you.

#### **55 Describe your dream job.**

How realistic is the answer? Are they a dreamer? Is your role something that will excite the candidate mid to long term?

#### **56 Tell me about a time you reached out for additional responsibility...**

Will the candidate go the extra mile?

#### **57 You are a manager. One of your employees has just told you another is stealing. What do you do?**

Situational question, will let you see how the candidate handles pressure. Look for honest pragmatism.

#### **58 Describe a work crisis you faced and how you handled it.**

Problem solvers or panic?

#### **59 Tell me about the last time you broke the rules.**

Honest answer? Acceptable in your company?

## **SALES STYLE**

#### **60 How do you plan for each day?**

Looking for evidence of planning and preparation, a trait of all the best sales people.

#### **61 How far ahead do you plan?**

Looking for evidence of planning and preparation, a trait of all the best sales people.



**62 How well do you manage your time? How do you do this?**

What tools are used? Can you provide similar?

**63 How do you measure your own performance?**

Look for an appreciation of sales process, managing KPI's etc.

**64 Describe the process you go through to qualify your prospects.**

Qualify sales technique and cultural fit

**65 Describe your sales 'style' (objection handling, negotiating, closing).**

Qualify sales technique and cultural fit

**66 What objection do you find the most difficult to overcome?**

Can give you insight valuable if you take them on, or highlight weaknesses which mean you should not hire

**67 How do you approach a first meeting with a new client?**

Assess extent of preparation and implementation of sales process.

**68 How do you generate your leads?**

Assess the fit in terms of how much support is needed and how much you can offer.

**69 Are you happy to cold call?**

Assess the answer in the context of how much raw new business work the role requires.

**70 How many appointments do you attend per week on average?**

Proactive enough for you / this role? Activity due to the candidate or his ex employers?

**71 How would you describe your presentation style?**

Assess this in relation to how much presenting will be required and how you want your solutions presenting

**72 How do you handle difficult clients when presenting?**

You are looking for an empathetic, problem solving approach

**73 Tell me about your best presentation.**

If presenting skills are important you should look for the good and the bad.

**74 Describe a situation with a client where you made a mistake? What was it? How did you rectify it?**

Look for honesty and a regarding ethics.

**75 Have you ever lied to win a deal?**

Look for honesty and a regarding ethics.

**76 How would you define ethical behaviour for a sales person?**

Compare the candidates ethical values with your own.

## PERSONAL

**77 How would you describe your personality?**

Open question

**78 What motivates you?**

Open question, looking for honest answers. Can you provide what motivates the candidate?

**79 How confident are you?**

You want a confident sales person. You don't want those who talk the talk but can't walk the walk.

**80 How well do you handle criticism? Based on?**

Especially relevant to a person who needs lots of development and if the candidate would be selling something new, or into new markets. They need to take constructive criticism.

**81 What good books have you read recently?**

You could change this to films. Media used in leisure time can be a personality indicator.

**82 What is your biggest achievement outside of work?**

Personality indicator - 'do-ers do' and 'achievers achieve'.

**83 How would you describe your values?**

Look out for answers which will fit culturally

**84 What are your interests outside of work?**

Look out for answers which will fit culturally. You may be interested in sporting achievements / hobbies etc.



**85 What are your goals?**

Look for ambitions which will compliment success in the role.

**86 Where do you want to be in 5 years?**

You are looking for positive, progressive and aspirational ambitions.

**87 How competitive are you? Example?**

The best sales people are often very competitive in nature. You want people who want to smash targets, not settle for getting near them.

**88 What do you like most about being in sales?**

High earnings? Success? Winning? Recognition? Learning what motivates the candidate can be invaluable pre and post hire.

**89 What do you like least about being in sales?**

Watch out for 'reluctant sales people' - you need to enjoy sales to achieve maximum results. If overly negative, alarm bells should ring.

**90 What makes a good sales person?**

A different angle to uncover the person, not the candidate.

**91 How well do you cope with rejection?**

The more new business is involved, the greater the tolerance for rejection needs to be.

**92 What makes you stand out from others?**

Whilst you are looking for someone who stands out, a zany person could be an issue.

**93 What do you need to improve on?**

Be wary of those who think they cannot improve.

**94 What is the biggest success of your career to date?**

**95 What is your biggest career regret?**

## LEVEL OF INTEREST

**96 How quickly do you think you can contribute? How will you do this? What would be your 60/90 day plan?**

See how the candidates thoughts on what is required to be successful in the role - and how long this should take - compare to yours

**97 If you stayed with your current organization, what would be your next move?**

If they say I would be promoted in 6 months - why are they leaving in the first place?! Counter offer likely?

**98 What are your salary requirements?**

Remember the requirement could be different from the current basic salary - higher or lower. Finlay James will also be able to provide this information.

**99 Who else are you interviewing with? What stage are you at?**

Qualifying this helps you to understand the chances of securing someone you are interested in. If it is a competitive scenario, you will need to move quickly.

**100 What would it take for you to accept the position today?**

Clearly you will be VERY interested to ask this question!